



**MINUTES OF THE SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEATAC)
MEETING OF 3 August 2009**
(Minutes approved on 14 September 2009.)

PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE:

SEATAC MEMBERS

Dr. Jonathan Baskin (absent)
Dan Cooper
Ty Garrison
Scott Harris (absent)
Michael Long
Dr. Thomas Scott (absent)
Dr. Cheryl Swift (absent)

REGIONAL PLANNING STAFF

Dr. Shirley Imsand (SEATAC coordinator)
Steven Mar (SEATAC coordinator)

Los Angeles County Sensitive Birds Species List

Tom Ryan tryan@gmail.com (949) 923-8824

Members of the Public

Lauren Tingco lftingco@gmail.com (831) 229-7981

MINUTES pagination:

1. **Minutes of 1 June 2009, p.2**
2. **Minutes of 6 July 2000, p.2**
3. **Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, OVOV Recommendations and Corrections, p.2**
4. **Introduction of Lauren Tingco**
5. **Discussion of application for Dr. Jeffrey Froke to be placed on the Certified Biologists List, p3**
6. **Discussion and presentation of the Los Angeles County Sensitive Bird Species List by Mr. Tom Ryan, p.4**

NOTE: SEATAC MEETINGS ARE INFORMAL WORKING SESSIONS. MEMBERS ARE APPOINTED VOLUNTEERS IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY. MINUTES ARE PREPARED BY PLANNING STAFF PRIMARILY FROM NOTES. SESSIONS ARE ALSO TAPE RECORDED BUT THE TAPES ARE PRIMARILY FOR BACK-UP USE BY STAFF. VISITORS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE PROPER NOTES AND/OR RECORD THE SESSION. ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED BY SEATAC DO NOT IMPLY TACIT APPROVAL. NEW OR CLARIFIED INFORMATION PRESENTED IN SUBSEQUENT SUBMITTALS MAY RAISE NEW ISSUES AND MAY REQUIRE FURTHER ANALYSIS. MINUTES ARE GENERALLY APPROVED AT THE NEXT SEATAC MEETING. DRAFT MINUTES MAY BE REQUESTED BUT ARE SUBJECT TO REVISION.

MINUTES

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Minutes of 1 June 2009** were approved as amended. Michael Long made a motion to approve the minutes and Ty Garrison seconded the motion to approve.
2. **Minutes of 6 July 2009** will be reviewed and approved by e-mail.
3. **Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, (One Valley, One Vision, OVOV) Recommendations and Corrections**

Dan Cooper made a motion and Michael Long seconded the motion to approve and send the SEATAC comments for One Valley, One Vision (OVOV, Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan) to Mitch Glaser and Marshall Adams of DRP.
4. **Lauren Tingco was introduced.** She is a graduate student who may volunteer to assist with the indexing and organization of SEATAC documents.
5. **Discussion of application for Dr. Jeffrey Froke to be placed on the Certified Biologists List**

SEATAC Comments:

Dr. Froke's credentials were judged adequate.

SEATAC Recommendations:

A. Dr. Froke's submitted report is too focused to show evidence that he can complete a SEATAC report according to SEATAC guidelines. Dr. Froke must submit a terrestrial report that conforms to SEATAC guidelines and addresses a more extensive list and discussion of flora, fauna, and rare taxa. The reports submitted are located in a highly disturbed manmade environment and have no examples of vegetation mapping, list and description of sensitive species and impact, nor regional discussion.

B. SEATAC questions whether Dr. Froke was given clear instructions for submitting his application. Dr. Imsand confirmed that Dr. Froke was given the standard guidelines for a biota report and the recommendation that reports submitted needed to be similar to a SEATAC report. Perhaps these guidelines need updating.

ACTION TAKEN: SEATAC recommends Dr. Froke submit an additional report that is closer to SEATAC document guidelines and addresses the above issues.

6. Discussion and presentation of the Los Angeles County Sensitive Bird Species List by Mr. Tom Ryan.

The list was published in the journal of *Western Tanager* 75(3) Jan/Feb 2009: E2-E16, and may be viewed at:

http://losangelesaudubon.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=325&Itemid=150

Notes on presentation:

List was compiled by a diverse group of people, including birders, professional ornithologists, and local Audubon members, and it was inspired by the book *California Bird Species of Special Concern* from the state. The state list and Audubon list were too broad-based. A discussion of which birds were endangered locally and which species within the County were of immediate conservation concern led to the paper presented today. The goal of the present list is to give priorities to bird conservation status. Each species was evaluated using placement into eight criteria categories. To be considered, a bird had to score in at least 2 categories and to make the list it had to have a place in at least 4 categories. Categories were: (1) Species that have been extirpated from the County; (2) Birds that are sensitive to urbanization; (3) Birds previously listed as threatened or endangered under federal or state law or included in the California BSSC list (Bird Species of Special Concern); (4) Population trends shown in data of the Breeding Bird Survey and Christmas Bird Count (trend for breeding or wintering); (5) County importance to the general population (1% or more of the North American population is found in the County during any season); (6) Species that have limited distribution (10% or more of the County's population occupies one site); (7) Species that have limited habitat; (8) Species that face immediate threat. Thirty-two (32) species of birds were identified during the survey that are sensitive in Los Angeles County but are not noted on other lists. All of the species are especially threatened in Los Angeles County due to development in their type of habitat. A list of species was also identified for a "Watch List" that lists species that are listed in three of the eight categories. The list is specific to Los Angeles County.

Mr. Ryan presented 9 examples out of the 32 species identified from the list, illustrating the kinds of birds that are designated on the list, which all have a kind of habitat that tends to be developed, channelized, or converted to some kind of recreation facility.

American Bittern – requires extensive marshland

Ferruginous Hawk – requires desert vegetation or dry habitat alfalfa fields such as those in Antelope Valley (County Listed species with similar requirements: Prairie Falcon, Mountain Plover, Long-eared Owl, Long-billed Curlew, Mountain Bluebird)

Elegant Tern – began nesting at the Port of Los Angeles in the 1980s and 1990s; requires flat, seaside areas; Los Angeles colony is one of only five in the world (County Listed species with similar requirements: Caspian Tern, Royal Tern, Black Skimmer, Least Tern)

Lesser Nighthawk – breeds on alluvial fans, now found in places like San Antonio Wash, Santa Clara River and tributaries. These areas are somewhat protected by flood control requirements, but not managed for wildlife and subject to development as well as flood control development. (County Listed species with similar requirements: Cactus Wren, Southern California Gnatcatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow)

Hairy Woodpecker – gallery of cottonwood riparian forests

Swainson's Thrush – requires shaded canyon drainages, often at the interface of foothills and broad valleys (County Listed species with similar requirements: Belted Kingfisher, Wilson's Warbler)

LeConte's Thrasher – A bird intolerant of disturbance, formerly on the bird species of concern list and now Removed; less than 100 pairs are left in the County; a case of a species with very limited habitat in the County (County Listed species with similar requirements: Scott's Oriole – Joshua Tree forest in the ecotone of the upper slopes of Antelope Valley)

Lincoln's Sparrow – Mountain meadows above 5000 ft., another case of a species with very limited habitat in the County

(County Listed species with similar limited habitat: Gray Flycatcher – Pinyon Pine of high desert interface with montane habitat)

Western Meadowlark – extensive grasslands

(County Listed species with similar requirements: Horned Lark, Loggerhead Shrike, Grasshopper Sparrow)

Mr. Ryan recommends that the species on the list be qualified under CEQA criteria of a local policy as special status species in the County. Mr. Ryan requests that the County and SEATAC take these species under consideration when doing biota reports, biological assessments, and when evaluating and selecting future SEAs. SEATAC could be the source for a database to track the status and distribution of these species within SEAs. SEATAC should take these species into account when making recommendations for avoidance, minimization of impacts, mitigation, and restoration.

SEATAC Recommendations:

- 1) **SEATAC will need to contend with the issue of multiple bird lists in reports and how to designate priorities for one list over another. At this point lists are made based upon CNDDDB (California Natural Diversity Database) and CNPS (California Native Plant Society). The sensitive bird list will add to species on the CNDDDB list.**
- 2) **CEQA states that if a species is threatened due to human activity and additional activity of a proposed project will threaten the species, then such impact is a significant impact.**
- 3) **Sometimes the decline due to human activity is difficult to demonstrate except in retrospect, but data from SEATAC reports may help.**
- 4) **When SEATAC does evaluations within SEAs, SEATAC would like to consider the species on the list, in addition to other standard references regarding sensitive bird species.**
- 5) **SEATAC states that ideally reports should show species (including the sensitive LA County species of this report) with observed locations plotted on maps showing vegetation overlay and project overlay. In the case of many observations of a certain species, a statement can be made about the associated habitat(s). This data of species occurrence can be indexed, and made available to the public via the County website.**
- 6) **SEATAC states that they believe that informed public comment will be the force that saves sensitive species and their habitats.**

ACTION TAKEN: No decision to act on this item was made due to a lack of a quorum.

OTHER MATTERS

4. Public comment pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code.

No public comments were made.